

P 061614Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY LUANDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5424
INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USEU BRUSSELS
USMISSION UN ROME
SECDEF WASHDC
JOINT STAFF WASHDC
CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
NSC WASHINGTON DC
SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS LUANDA 000232

AIDAC

USAID FOR DCHA/OFDA HALE, POWER, ROGERS; USAID FOR DCHA/FFP
PETERSON; USAID FOR AFR/SA HARMON, MENDELSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [AO](#)

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF FLOODING IN CUNENE AND CUANDO, CUBANGO
PROVINCES, SOUTHERN ANGOLA

Ref: a) Luanda 154, b) Luanda 166, c) State 026112, d) Luanda 187

SUMMARY

From March 26 through March 31, a multi-agency team, including a USAID Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) Southern Africa acting regional advisor and a USAID Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) officer, visited Luanda and flood-affected provinces of Cunene and Cuando Cubango in southern Angola. The team met with UN, IO, NGO, USG Angola mission officers, flood-affected populations, and local officials to assess the adequacy of current relief efforts, identify critical gaps in the response effort, and recommend additional assistance. Further efforts are needed to prevent potentially large outbreaks of water-borne disease (e.g., cholera) and malaria as flood waters recede. In addition to the floods, the heavy, untimely rains damaged crops throughout the provinces, threatening food security. As of March 30, the Government of Angola (GOA) had spent \$8 million for emergency response, and Exxon-Mobil pledged \$75,000 to help the GOA response. The USG has provided \$65,000 for immediate relief and assessment. The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CEFF) has awarded \$2.3 million for emergency response to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter, and health. The National Commission for Civil Protection (CP) has generally responded well. Their coordination of the response greatly improved since the flood of 2008. However, there is concern about the GOA's technical capacity to assess, adequately resource and maintain distribution of assistance post-emergency, beyond the completion of the CP's mandate of emergency response. The USG should consider support for food assistance, WASH, shelter, and livelihoods-recovery projects. Longer term, disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities, including support for development of flood early warning systems, should also be considered.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Response to date: At a meeting with donors and the humanitarian community on March 30, the GOA CP reported it had spent \$8 million on emergency response to date. The head of CP stated that it welcomes international support, but will not issue a formal declaration of emergency, as the GOA is capable of handling the response. As previously reported, the GOA delivered extensive relief supplies to the affected areas using government air assets. On March 30, Exxon-Mobil announced a \$75,000 contribution to the GOA response. UN agencies previously allocated \$600,000, and now the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has granted an additional \$2.3 million to provide access to safe water (UNICEF), increase availability of health services (WHO) and provide shelter materials

and non-food items (IOM). The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) informed the assessment team of an appeal that will be released by mid-April to support the work of the Angola Red Cross (ARC). The USG has provided \$65,000 to date, which funded air transport for this assessment and granted \$48,000 to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to support immediate relief in Cunene. This assistance, to be provided through CRS partner, Caritas, will distribute flood emergency kits to 3,000 households. The European Commission is sending a technical assessment team to Angola the first week of April, and the World Food Programme team plans an assessment of food security.

THE ASSESSMENT VISIT:

¶2. USAID/Angola invited USAID/OFDA and USAID/FFP to join the US Embassy deputy chief of mission, USAID/Angola and representatives of UNICEF, IFRC, CRS, and IOM on an assessment mission to hard-hit municipalities of Ondjiva, Namacunde, Cuvelai and Xangongo in Cunene province. Due to logistical and access difficulties, only the provincial capital of Menongue was visited in Cuando Cubango province. Representatives of CP accompanied the mission throughout. The team flew over flood-affected areas of both provinces. Members met key government and CP officials in both provinces. In Cunene, they met officials from CP at the municipality and commune level and members of the affected populations. OFDA briefly met with members of a UN WHO team that was in Cunene to conduct a joint assessment of public needs with the Ministry of Health. Team members also met with Oxfam in the provincial capital of Ondjiva, where that organization partners with UNICEF and ARC to assist in the camps, the director of the Ministry of Assistance and Social Reintegration (MINARS), and the Catholic Diocese of Ondjiva/Caritas.

GENERAL FLOOD SITUATION:

¶3. The National Institute of Meteorology of Angola predicted that abnormally heavy rains will last into April. Local officials predicted that the rains and flooding could continue into May in some areas. On March 30, the UN estimated that floods affected 220,000 people in Cunene, Cuando Cubango, Moxico, Malange, Bie, Huambo, and Lunda Sul provinces, with 22 deaths nationwide, mostly due to drowning. Others were crushed by falling homes or killed by displaced animals (crocodiles, hippos). While CP reports that the focus is shifting to recovery in Cunene, the UN and IOM report that the situation in Cuando Cubango is still ?worsening.? There is growing concern for Moxico Province, where the Zambezi River continues to rise.

¶4. The UN reports the displacement of 52,646 people and 13 deaths in Cunene Province, with 25,000 in relocation camps in Ondjiva. Other displaced people stay with family or neighbors. Ondjiva normally receives 5-600 mm of water per year. In 2008, 800mm were recorded, and in 2009, 922 mm have already fallen. The provincial ministry of agriculture reported 225,000 hectares of agricultural land destroyed, and 363,500 animals at risk of death. CP and other government officials told the team that floods damaged primary and secondary roads, bridges and water/sanitation infrastructure, but several key access routes (e.g., Ondjiva-Cuvelai and Ondjiva-Namibia) have recently reopened as waters receded and necessary repairs were made. In Ondjiva, the provincial CP holds daily briefings and coordination meetings with stakeholders.

¶5. In Cuando Cubango province, the UN reports 30,000 people directly affected and 12,000 people displaced by flooding in the municipalities of Menongue, Calai, Cuangar, Dirico, Rivungo, Kus and Mavinga. Provincial CP reported no access to Cuangar, Dirico and Calai, along the Cubango River (note: aka Okavango in Namibia), as the road from Menongue has been impassable. The airstrip in Calai has flooded and is reported to be unusable. Poor access has made accurate assessment of damage and needs impossible as of the visit on March 28. Even with helicopters, great distances and logistical problems make thorough assessment and relief delivery difficult. The GOA has reportedly asked the Government of Namibia for support in accessing these areas. Further assessment of affected areas not yet adequately reached will be needed to provide more accurate information on numbers affected, damages and needs. It is possible that numbers affected will change as access improves.

¶16. In Moxico province, the UN reported 44,000 people affected by flooding, with 12,000 people displaced and 1,048 houses destroyed. In the municipality of Luau, 986 families lost their houses; in the capital of Luena, along the Cassai River, 121 families; and in Lumbala municipality, on the Zambezi River, 62 families.

DISPLACEMENT AND CAMPS:

¶17. The assessment team visited three camps housing displaced persons (IDPs) in Ondjiva. According to the CP and UN, approximately 25,000 people reside in the three camps; however, numbers provided during visits suggested no more than 10,000. The reason for this discrepancy is not clear. The vast majority of households in the camps have been there since last year's floods. Some went back to their original, flooded homes after waters receded last year, but returned to the camps with the new floods.

¶18. The camps are managed by CP, with support from elected camp residents and Angolan Red Cross volunteers. UNICEF, in cooperation with CP, Oxfam and the Angola Red Cross, provide water, sanitation and hygiene promotion in the camps. Two camps were established in 2008. A third camp was established in 2009, but many of its residents were also displaced in 2008. All camp residents are housed in tents provided by CP. The camp management reported that most camp residents are employed, some with the government. The team noted the presence of generators, satellite television dishes, and gardens. It's generally believed that people remain in the camps waiting for the construction of 2500 houses promised by the GOA last year. At the time of the visit, only one prototype house had been constructed, and it flooded this year. A recent GOA delegation to Camp 2 renewed the promise of new home construction. Camp managers felt that allocation of plots and provision of building materials might be enough to motivate camp residents to relocate.

¶19. Water, sanitation and hygiene present significant problems in the camps. In Camps 1 and 3, which are adjacent, there were four water bladders with tap stands that were unfilled, pending transport by CP of a UNICEF portable water-treatment system that would fill the bladders from a nearby pond. In Camp 2, four boreholes were drilled, but only one was usable. Due to damage done during drilling, the other 3 are salty. To compensate, trucks bring water to tanks. In Camps 1 and 3, latrines built by UNICEF and Oxfam last year collapsed, and the zinc sheeting surrounding them was stolen. Oxfam and CP are constructing new latrines. In Camp 2, the zinc sheets are intact, but the water table has risen into the latrines, making them unusable until the water subsides.

¶10. Generally, since camp residents have resumed or continued their livelihood pursuits, managers readily admitted it is questionable that this whole population needs food assistance at this time. They have income and ready access to markets. Exceptions may be the newly displaced and small business operators who remain at a disadvantage because the camps are located far from the market, and transport costs cut into their profits.

¶11. With conservative reports estimating 52,000 people displaced in Cunene, more than half have sought shelter with other families. The situation of those living with hosts has not been assessed. Many of the displaced have lost or experienced heavy damage to their houses and may require support to rebuild or repair existing structures. IOM received support, through the CERF, to provide shelter assistance to 300 vulnerable families in Cunene and only 150 families each in Cuando Cubango and Moxico. There is likely a need for additional assistance with shelter materials.

GENERALLY POOR/NO HARVEST AFFECTING GENERAL POPULATION

¶12. The agricultural ministry, municipal administrators, and farmers reported that there would be little to nothing harvested this year in the provinces visited. The excessive rains affected all farmers and all crops. Sorghum was stunted and showed signs of nitrogen deprivation. Observation from the air showed that the damage went far beyond the flooded area. The long, heavy rains came when plants were in a young fragile state. Some were washed away, but all suffered from the deprivation of sun and warmth during the critical growth period. Heavy rains leached nutrients from the soil, especially in areas where the soil is sandy. There is a single cropping season when farmers cultivate cereal, peanuts, and

pumpkins. Another chance to harvest will not come until May 2010. For many of the affected provinces, this is the second to fourth consecutive year of poor production -- due to drought in 2006 and 2007, followed by floods in 2008 and 2009.

COPING IN RURAL AREAS WITHOUT CEREAL HARVEST

¶13. Without a cereal harvest, households with livestock were identified as those best able to sustain themselves. Dairy products provide good nutrition; animals may be traded for flour or cash; they provide transportation to and from markets; and in the next cropping season, they will provide draught power. However, livestock numbers were severely depleted during Angola's 32-year civil war (1975-2002), and drought, flood, disease and sales necessitated by poor harvest have hampered recovery of the numbers. Few households (mostly returned refugees and decommissioned soldiers) have benefited from restocking support.

¶14. Wild foods and household gardens provide nutrition currently and will remain important until conditions become too dry. The floods brought fish that people were catching and drying for later consumption.

¶15. Other livelihood pursuits that bolster household food security are casual labor and remittances from relatives in Namibia or urban centers.

REPORTS OF STARVATION

¶16. Caritas has received reports of starvation from communicants who come to their churches from remote areas. In February, a Caritas team followed a report to one site of these reports and found severely wasted adults. Based on the nature of the other reports, they believe that there are likely to be similar cases scattered throughout Cunene province. It may be that these households are particularly disadvantaged by the remoteness of their homesteads, which limits their access to markets and health and veterinary care, as well as inhibiting access by others who would distribute food or provide services. It is also possible these cases are HIV/AIDS related. Caritas shared the reports with MINARS, and the provincial director reported plans to investigate further, plans that were delayed by the floods.

GOVERNMENT FOOD ASSISTANCE

¶17. MINARS has three food distribution programs: An emergency response for short-term assistance to those displaced; a program for long-term assistance for chronic welfare cases (elderly, HIV-affected, unemployed); and extended relief for the 2008 flood victims, which is expected to continue for the 2009 victims. Planned rations for all programs are robust, but reports indicate that the quantities provided by the central government have been insufficient. Different means adopted at the local level to "stretch" the commodities included: reducing rations or stretching the period between distributions; eliminating households from the chronic-welfare caseload; and serving only flood victims that resembled chronic-welfare cases.

¶18. The central government allocates food to provinces, which, in turn, allocate to municipalities on unclear bases, with little or no monitoring of the needs or of the food distribution. The team found no evidence that quantities supplied by the central government are based on local assessments.

FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD ASSISTANCE: CONCLUSIONS

¶19. Given the general failure of the crops, it appears that rural households without sufficient livestock will almost certainly face significant food insecurity during the coming year. Also vulnerable are those who live in the most remote areas, far from markets, veterinary services, and centers of food-distribution operations. Consequently, it is likely that a considerable portion of the rural population in the provinces visited, not just those affected directly by the floods, will need food assistance until the next harvest. Households in camps of urban IDPs are less likely to need food support. Further assessment is needed to accurately quantify the proportion of households that will be food insecure, as well as the degree and period of food insecurity. And, given the wealth and

apparent commitment of GoA officials to solve their own problem, it seems preferable that WFP work with MINARS to build capacity at the municipality and provincial levels to assess and report food needs to the central government and to effectively target and efficiently distribute food. Angola may have sufficient resources to acquire food, but apparently lacks capacity to accurately define needs and distribute the food. Given the difficult access to many of the most vulnerable households, this is a daunting undertaking.

WASH AND HEALTH:

¶20. At the March 30 meeting with the UN country team, donors and other humanitarian actors, the head of the CP said that the CP's main concern now is the prevention of a new 'disease disaster' that could arise post-flooding. WASH is a major concern in all flood-affected areas. Officials at the provincial and municipal levels reported significant damage to water-treatment facilities, water points, sanitation systems, and other WASH infrastructure. Floods raised water tables and contaminated water points. As flood waters recede in Cunene now, and later in Cuando Cubango, concern continues regarding possible outbreaks of water-borne disease due to poor access to safe water in both rural and urban areas. There is also the likelihood of a higher incidence of malaria, due to the amount of stagnant water. UNICEF is working closely with the GOA and partners to address WASH issues. WHO has fielded an emergency team to the affected areas to work with the Ministry of Health on disease surveillance and mosquito-net sensitization campaigns for malaria prevention.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION:

¶21. USAID/OFDA and USAID/FFP reps consulted with USAID/Angola, UN agencies, CP and other humanitarian actors regarding the status of early warning systems and risk-reduction activities and found that there was a clear need for early warning systems in flood-affected areas, as well as risk-mapping of flood-prone areas. The CP noted that it has engaged technical consultants to examine risks and possible mitigation projects. With the absence of a Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) and the closure of the Angola FEWSNET office over a year ago, there is an apparent gap in technical expertise at the national level.

¶22. Oxfam, IFRC and CRS, among others, expressed intent in developing DRR programs. CP's mandate is only emergency response; therefore, DRR activities must link up with ministries concerned with longer-term recovery and disaster preparedness. At present, capacity seems weak in this arena.

RECOMMENDATIONS

¶23. Based on the assessment team's discussions and observations, the following areas/sectors present gaps and should be considered for additional support (in order of immediate relief to intermediate recovery):

¶24. Support provision of shelter materials and other non-food items to ensure wider coverage of needs, and to support the return of displaced in camps, as well as rebuilding in affected rural areas.

¶25. Support to the WASH sector if UNICEF and its partners are unable to meet demands with their current level of funding. Such interventions as hygiene promotion, distribution of hygiene kits, water treatment, and rehabilitation of sanitation facilities should be considered.

¶26. Support for livelihoods recovery for rural households that have suffered catastrophic loss of assets. Support might take the form of targeted Cash-for-Work projects to add income to households. Examples are road rehabilitation, water and sanitation rehabilitation and school rehabilitation.

¶27. Because of the apparent advantage and significance of livestock rearing to food security in these provinces, the assessment team recommends considering support for programs to increase livestock numbers in the area, being careful not to exceed the numbers that the land can support in normal years. This could include interventions to restock, improve coverage of vaccination/veterinary services, and develop low-tech early warning to alert owners of when/where to move animals as flood waters rise.

¶28. Support continued work with USAID/Angola and relevant UN agencies to explore appropriate avenues to support Disaster Risk Reduction during the post-flood recovery period and beyond. Consideration should be given to providing support to partners to assist the GOA in building flood and famine early warning systems, flood risk-mapping, and community preparedness planning.

¶29. USAID/Angola and the regional office of USAID/FFP should encourage the World Food Programme and the GOA to work together to assess the needs and provide food assistance to food-insecure rural households in the southern provinces. The assessment and distribution should be conducted in ways that build capacities at the central, provincial and municipality levels of the GOA, including strengthening the capacity of the national early warning unit.

CONCLUSION

¶30. USAID/Angola will continue to coordinate with USAID/OFDA and USAID/FFP to monitor the situation and urges OFDA and FFP to give every consideration to specific requests for additional assistance against the identified gaps and recommendations detailed above.

HAWKINS